

The Othona Community - Early Summer 2023.

Volunteering brings a community together. Our local villages, Tillingham, St Lawrence, Bradwell on Sea and beyond, all flourish because of those who have the gifts of time, energy and commitment, and who are willing to share these gifts with others. Many do not have these opportunities, as work, home and family responsibilities leave little time to spare, and we all need some relaxation. But for those who have been part of our local communities of volunteers this year, the rewards have been great: from organising events to making them happen, from serving as Councillors to serving tea, all are opportunities to contribute, and to make new friends.

The Othona Community would never have come to being, let alone survived and thrived, without the many hundreds of people who have kept the spirit of community alive for 57 years! In the early days everyone there was a volunteer, from the first organisers with our founder Norman Motley to those who first stayed, helping carry water to the site, cook in a makeshift kitchen area, dig toilet pits and lead challenging discussions in the aftermath of the Second World War. For a while it must have seemed that the world was moving in the right direction, as memories of war faded and we in the West seemed to be heading towards the economic stability that enabled us to develop education, health and social care for all.....or were we?

The Essex Green Weekend, hosted by Othona over the early May Bank Holiday, was a really positive and enjoyable festival of hope...but realistic hope, highlighting many areas where a new direction in life is the only way to sustain our fragile planet. Some 150 people gathered to participate in talks and discussions on ways in which our own lifestyle changes, such as Green Churches and biodynamic farming in harmony with nature, can be small steps to addressing issues of climate change and its consequent global challenges for the world's peoples. Practical demonstrations of scything and hedging, great music from around Essex, and fantastic food cooked by a great team of volunteers, all helped to make the weekend a success.

We have more events coming up in our open Programme – and did you know that outside these times the Community still functions, hosting many groups, celebrations and day visitors, all co-ordinated by our tiny but totally dedicated staff team? Debbie and Richard, our Warden/Managers, need help with all events, from an hour or two helping clean and tidy to regular gardening support as the vegetable plot gets its summer makeover – our meals are always best with our own fruit, veg and herbs. Some volunteers make a regular commitment, while others are a phone call away from helping as needed. If you would like to take an active part in the rather unusual aspect of our village life – there is only one other Othona Community Centre in the world – do contact Debbie, Richard or Phil by email or phone, More is coming up on our Programme for the summer. While some weeks are taken by school groups, there are plenty of times for all to share:

19th – 23rd June – “Land, Sea and Sky” run by Jane Pearse and Catherine Bond.

26th June - 2nd July “Scything Week” with Claire White.

Fri 30th June to Sun 2nd July Bradwell Pilgrimage Weekend, with the Pilgrimage on the Saturday.

Debbie and Richard Sanders are our Warden/Managers, Othona is accessed through East Hall Farm, East End Rd, Bradwell on Sea (electric entry gate, collect free exit token from the office.)

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